

Date: April 15, 2013

To: Bob Hetzel
Administration & Finance

From: Allison Thaiss & Nadia Carmosini
Joint Committee on Sustainability (JCES)

Re: JCES Recommendation for UW-La Crosse Campus Garden

Proposal for a UW-L Campus Garden

One of the charges given to the Joint Committee for Environmental Sustainability (JCES) for 2012-13 was to examine the potential for establishing a campus garden. Interest in a campus garden has been growing for many years among UW-La Crosse students and faculty as an important way to add to UW-L's commitment to sustainability. There is a need for more educational opportunities in environmental sustainability, which we believe the garden would provide for our students.

Motivation & Importance

JCES's mission is to promote UW-La Crosse's sustainable future and we feel that establishing a campus garden would help achieve this mission by providing educational, environmental, lifestyle, and nutritional benefits, as well as strengthen a sense of community on campus. As Lao Tzu once said, "Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Show him how to catch fish, feed him for a lifetime". In preparation for life after college, a garden would give students the opportunity for hands on experience growing food, learning about healthy eating and food preparation, and working with others in a community project. It has been demonstrated that local foods are fresh, taste better, have more nutrients, reduce carbon emissions from transportation, have a reduced risk of contamination, and give people a meaningful connection with their food. Having fresh produce available for students would give those living on a tight budget a healthy alternative to buying inexpensive low-nutritional food. A garden would also visually represent UW-L's commitment to teaching students the importance of living a sustainable, healthy, and active lifestyle.

Support

There is a critical mass of groups interested in supporting a successful campus garden. Among these groups is the student organization "Students for Sustainability, which is comprised of over 25 active members that are interested in volunteering hours to initiate the garden. Members of JCES are also ready to support the development and maintenance of campus garden activities. Individuals behind this initiative include Allison Thaiss (UW-L Student Association Environmental Sustainability Director), Ian Wright (UW-L Green Fund Coordinator), Sue White & Nathan Barnhart (Recreational Eagle Center) and Kim Tiber (Facilities and Planning). In addition, several

faculty members from a variety of departments on campus have expressed an interest to promote and support the garden.

Organization & Management

The operation of a campus garden can be approached in many ways. The eight gardens in the UW System alone reveal eight different models ranging from large operations (>1 acre) with dedicated directors managing academic programs and public gardening, to smaller on-campus endeavors operated by student organizations. As we envision it, the UW-L Campus Garden will be a productive and aesthetically-pleasing on-campus garden operated by a Campus Garden Club with an active volunteer faculty advisor and a temporary paid student intern.

Development of the UW-L Campus Garden Club

The UW-L Garden Club will organize and apply to become an official student organization according to established campus procedures (2012-13 Student Organization Leader Guide). A unique aspect of the Garden Club is that it will remain active year round (Table 1). In this way, the Garden Club will provide an opportunity for social engagement and off-curricular learning opportunities for students who remain at UW-L over the summer. During the academic year, Garden Club activities will focus on providing educational opportunities related to gardening, food preparation, and sustainable living by inviting guest speakers, hosting workshops (e.g., vermicomposting), and volunteering in the community. Activities will also include garden planning, seed starting and seed saving. During the summer, the club will be operated as a collective, with members who remain on campus being required to contribute a certain number of volunteer hours to receive produce. Dues will be collected and used to sustain routine gardening activities (e.g., seeds and soil purchasing). Other activities the club may become involved with include visiting other community gardens and giving tours of the campus garden to interested community members.

Table 1. Proposed Activities for the UW-L Campus Garden Club

Month	Club Activities
September - December	Organizational meetings, invite speakers, host workshops.
February	Organization meeting, establish garden design for the growing season.
March	Select and order seeds
April	Establish seedlings
May	Build/amend raised beds; plant seeds and seedlings; water
June	Water; harvest; plant
July	Water; harvest; plant
August	Water; harvest; plant
Sept	Water; harvest;
Oct	Harvest; close garden for winter; review successes & challenges;

Garden Club Advisor

The garden club advisor will play an active role in managing the garden and in educating student members in organic/sustainable gardening practices. This will be particularly important during the early stages of development when student members' experience may be limited. The advisor will also play an important role in helping students identify knowledgeable speakers for monthly club meetings. Dr. Nadia Carmosini, assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry and an active Bluff County Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV), will volunteer to act as the faculty advisor in fulfillment of annual MGV membership requirements. In May 2013, Dr. Carmosini will have completed Level 2 MGV training in managing community gardens.

The advisor will help students manage the garden by advising on issues such as garden design, seed starting, planting, maintaining soil fertility, plant cultivar selection, and pest and disease management. Eventual supervision of the garden project may be handled by the Campus Sustainability Coordinator once this position is created.

Paid Student Intern

For the first year of the garden's establishment, a paid student intern working under the guidance of the club advisor will be hired to successfully manage the logistical operations of the garden. The primary duties of the intern will be to organize building of the beds, informing club members of weekly work and produce distribution days/times; keep track of volunteer hours; organize the fair distribution of food and transportation of extra produce to community food banks. Depending on the level of student interest, this position may also be supplemented with a non-paid volunteer. Eventually, this position will be assumed by a student member of the Garden Club.

Garden Appearance & Design

The ascetic presentation of the garden is very important in keeping with UW-La Crosse's Campus Master Plan. The campus garden will employ a 4 ft x 4 ft raised bed design using aesthetically pleasing red cedar boards of the highest quality. To initiate the Garden Club activities, we propose to build four raised beds. The raised bed design requires no native soil disturbance, and therefore will not result in trampled muddy paths as is seen in other campus areas where students frequently cut across campus lawns. Walk areas around the raised beds will be mulched in the same manner as other campus beds to maintain campus cohesiveness. The Garden Club will ensure that beds are neatly maintained and free of weeds. Additional raised flower beds can also be implemented in the garden design following consultation with Kim Tiber (Facilities and Planning). A sign at the entrance of the garden will be developed in accordance with the Campus Master Plan.

The raised bed square foot garden is among the most frequently used designs for community gardens for several reasons. First, it requires no heavy equipment or machinery. Most work can be done in the garden with a simple hand trowel. Secondly, the beds are filled with an ideal growing medium resulting in highly productivity over minimal space. This design also minimizes weeding and the need for pest control. The main pieces of equipment needed to maintain the garden will include hand trowels and rakes, hoses, and water cans. To store this

equipment, we proposed that a small (8 ft x 8 ft) aesthetically pleasing garden shed be built nearby to conveniently and neatly store the equipment.

Garden Produce

Produce will be first allocated to those with the most volunteer hours as will be outlined in the Garden Club bylaws. The produce will then be free to any UWL Student or faculty/staff member on specified distribution days. The garden club will also be allowed to use produce for cooking and canning classes. Any extra produce will be donated to local food banks and charities. There would also be the possibility to integrate produce from the garden into the dining services on campus in the future. Sodexo has expressed interest in integrating herbs from the garden into their menu in its first year.

Proposed Location

The level field located on Badger St. between the Recreational Eagle Center and the Whitney Center has been identified as a suitable site for the garden (Fig 1). This area is highly visible, which will help raise campus awareness of the Garden Club's activities and mission. In addition, it is located between two buildings that already seek to foster healthy student living through physical activity and healthy eating, making it a natural fit. Kim Tiber (Facilities and Planning) does not foresee any conflicts with building a garden in this location. There are two irrigation spouts that will have to be marked to ensure that they are not obstructed. Sue White (Recreational Eagle Center) has agreed to allow us access to water from their building. She has expressed a great deal of gratitude towards students for the Green Fund for support in energy saving projects. There is an outdoor faucet nearby that would allow the garden access to water. The Eagle Recreation Center has also identified this as an area that would not conflict with any future expansions or building plans.



Figure 1. Proposed location for the campus garden. The location is situation on Badger St. between the Recreational Eagle Center and Whitney Center.

Proposed Funding

Initial funding for the start-up of this project will be applied for through the UW-La Crosse Green Fund. Looking to the future, the garden will be self-sustaining and be operated from Garden Club membership dues.